



# Speakers of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

*Celebrating 150 Years as a Province  
1870-2020*

## The History of the Speaker

The position of Speaker of the House can be traced back to 1377, when Sir Thomas Hungerford was appointed to the Parliament of England. The original role of the Speaker was to communicate information to the Monarch on behalf of the House of Commons. This made the role very dangerous, as the Monarch could have the Speaker put to death if they received information that displeased them. Historians believe that seven Speakers were executed between 1394 and 1535, and some have indicated that the original purpose of the opening procession was to provide protection to the Speaker as they entered the House. Though the first Speakers were appointed by the Monarch, over the centuries many powers of the Monarchy were turned over to parliament. During this shift in power, the Speaker's role transformed, and they are now chosen by Members of the House of Commons. Outside of the United Kingdom, the role of the Speaker has evolved throughout the commonwealth. No longer a ceremonial role, that of the Speaker now encompasses a variety of responsibilities, from administrative tasks to acting as the authority on the rules and conduct of proceedings during House sittings. The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba was historically a position appointed by the Premier, but since 1999 the Speaker has been chosen via secret ballot in which all elected Members of the Assembly vote.

## The Role of the Speaker

In Manitoba, the modern Speaker of the House is not just a ceremonial figure, but plays a significant role in supporting and ensuring that Assembly Offices strive to achieve their best in a dynamic environment. The Speaker is the highest authority in the Legislative Assembly, representing the Legislature in all its powers and proceedings. The duties of the office fall into four categories:

1. The Speaker acts as a spokesperson of the Assembly in all its relations with authorities outside of the Legislature. This includes meeting with dignitaries from around the globe.
2. The Speaker presides over the sitting of the Assembly and enforces the rules, order, and conduct of proceedings. The Speaker does not take part in debates, and must remain impartial. They control debates in the Chamber, and all questions and statements during a formal sitting must be directed through the Speaker.
3. The Speaker is responsible for the daily administration of the Legislative Assembly, with the many Assembly employees who provide services for Members reporting to them. The Speaker is the Chairperson of the Legislative Assembly Management Commission (LAMC) which is responsible for the financial management of the Assembly and establishes budgets and administrative policies for Assembly Offices. Manitoba's Independent Officers (Chief Electoral Officer, The Ombudsman, Auditor-General, etc.) report to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba through the Speaker.
4. The Speaker is the President of the Manitoba Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

Like all Members of the Legislative Assembly, the Speaker is first elected in one of the 57 provincial constituencies. They are then elected Speaker via secret ballot cast by all Members during the first sitting of the Legislative Session following an election. In addition to their duties as head of the Assembly, the Speaker also attends to the tasks involved in being a Member of the Assembly, such as responding to the concerns of their constituents.



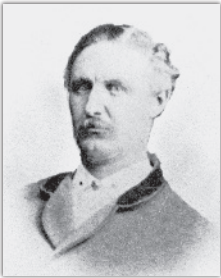
## Hon. Joseph Royal



**Speaker**  
1871-1872

Joseph Royal was born in 1873 in Repentigny, Lower Canada. In his adult life, Royal was the founder and Chief Editor of “La Revue Canadienne”, and founded the newspaper “Le Métis”. In 1870 he was acclaimed as a Member of the Legislative Assembly upon the establishment of Manitoba as a Province of the Dominion of Canada. Royal served as Speaker of the Assembly from 1871 to 1872, and was appointed Member of the Executive Council and Provincial Secretary in 1872. He also served as Attorney-General from 1876-1878, and as Minister of Public Works from 1878-1879.

## Hon. Curtis Bird



**Speaker**  
1873-1874

Born in 1838, Curtis Bird trained as a Medical Doctor, and worked as a coroner in the Winnipeg area. Bird owned and operated a drugstore on the corner of Main and Bannatyne, which had the first soda fountain in the west installed in 1873. He was elected Member of the Legislative Assembly in 1870, and was re-elected in 1874. Bird served as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly from 1873 to December of 1874. In March 1873 Bird was lured from his home, pulled off of his cutter (carriage) by a group of unknown men, and beaten and covered in hot tar. It is thought that they were angry at the Speaker of the House for ruling out of order a Bill that would have incorporated the City of Winnipeg. He later moved to England, where he died in 1876.

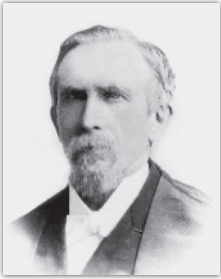
## Hon. Joseph Dubuc



**Speaker**  
1875-1878

Joseph Dubuc was born in Ste. Martine in 1840, and attended Montreal College and McGill University. He was called to the Quebec bar, and later moved to Winnipeg, becoming a member of Louis Riel’s provisional government. Dubuc was elected Member of the Legislative Assembly in 1870 for the constituency of Baie de St. Paule, and served as the Attorney General in 1874. Dubuc became Speaker of the House in 1875 and served in this position until 1878. He was proclaimed as the Member of Parliament for the constituency of Provencher in 1878, and became chief justice of Manitoba in 1903.

## Hon. John Wright Sifton



**Speaker**  
1879

John Wright Sifton was born in London Township Upper Canada in 1833. His firm *Sifton, Ward & Co.* built sections of the Canadian Pacific railway. In 1878 Sifton was elected Member of the Legislative Assembly for the constituency of St. Clements, and served as Speaker of the Assembly in 1879. He was elected to the new constituency of Brandon in 1881 during a by-election. Sifton served as the Reeve of the rural municipality of Cornwallis, and was Deputy Minister of Public Works for the Thomas Greenway Government.

## Hon. Gilbert McMicken



**Speaker**  
1880-1882

Gilbert McMicken was born in 1813, moving to Canada from Scotland in 1832. He represented the County of Wellend in the Assembly of Canada from 1858 to 1861. McMicken assisted in growing Canada's telegraphic communications network, and patented two telegraphy improvements. He was elected Member of the Legislative Assembly in 1879 for the constituency of Cartier, and served as Speaker of the Assembly from 1880 to 1882.

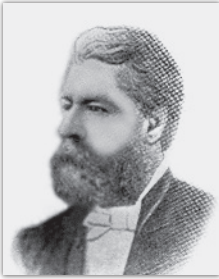
## Hon. Alexander Murray



**Speaker**  
1883-1886

Alexander Murray was born in Kildonan in 1839, and educated at St. John's College. He helped to found the Winnipeg Board of Trade in 1873, and was elected Member of the Legislative Assembly for the constituency of St. Charles in 1874. Murray served as Police Magistrate in East Marquette, and was elected Member of the Legislative Assembly in 1879 for the constituency of Assiniboia. Murray maintained the role of Speaker of the Assembly from 1883 to 1886.

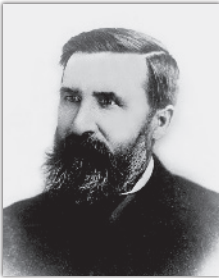
## Hon. David Glass



**Speaker**  
1887-1888

David Glass was born in Middlesex County Upper Canada in 1829. He was called to the Bar of Upper Canada in 1864 and the Bar of Manitoba in 1882. Glass was a city councillor in London Ontario from 1855 to 1858, as well as Mayor of London Ontario in 1858, 1864, and 1865. Glass was elected Member of Parliament for Middlesex in 1872, and in 1886 he was elected Member of the Legislative Assembly for the constituency of St. Clements. Glass served as Speaker of the Assembly from 1887 to 1888.

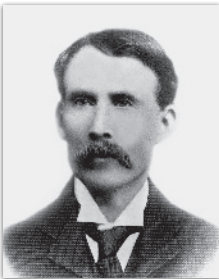
## Hon. William Winram



**Speaker**  
1888-1891

William Winram was born in 1838, moving to Manitoba in 1878. He was acclaimed Member of the Legislative Assembly for the constituency of Dufferin South in 1879, and as the Member for the constituency of Manitou in 1888. Winram served as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly from 1888 until his death in February of 1891.

## Hon. Samuel Jacob Jackson



**Speaker**  
1891-1895

Samuel Jacob Jackson was born in Ireland in 1848, and educated in Ontario. He moved to Manitoba in 1871, and was Alderman for the City of Winnipeg in 1877. In 1883 Jackson was elected Member of the Legislative Assembly for the constituency of Rockwood, and he served as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly from 1891 to 1895. He was elected Member of Parliament for the constituency of Selkirk in 1904.

## Hon. Finlay McNaughton Young



**Speaker**  
1895-1899

Finlay McNaughton Young was born in Quebec in 1852, and was part owner of the Grain Mill at Killarney. He was first elected Member of the Legislative Assembly in 1883 for the constituency of Turtle Mountain, and was elected for the new constituency of Killarney in 1888. Young served as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly from 1895 to 1899, and was appointed to the Senate of Canada in 1900 where he served until his death in 1916.

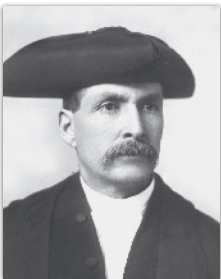
## Hon. William Hespeler



**Speaker**  
1900-1903

William Hespeler was born in Germany, and educated at the Institute of Karlsruhe. He was Alderman for the city of Winnipeg in 1876. In the 1870s Hespeler assisted in the migration of roughly seven thousand Russian and German Mennonites to Manitoba. He was elected Member of the Legislative Assembly in 1899 for the constituency of Rosenfeldt, and served as Speaker of the Assembly from 1900 to 1903.

## Hon. James Johnson



**Speaker**  
1904-1916

James Johnson was born in Mitchell Ontario in 1855, and in his adult life became president of the Boissevain Land Company. He served as Councillor and Reeve of the Rural Municipalities of Riverside and Morton, and Councillor and Mayor of the Rural Municipality of Boissevain. Johnson Was elected Member of the Legislative Assembly in a by-election in 1897 for the constituency of Turtle Mountain, and re-elected in the general election in 1899. He served as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba from 1904 to 1916.

## Hon. James B. Baird



**Speaker**  
1916-1922

James Baird was born in Appleton Ontario in 1859. In his adult life he was acclaimed as the first Mayor of Pilot Mound, and served three terms without opposition. In 1907 Baird was elected member of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba for the constituency of Mountain. He served as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba from 1916 to 1922.

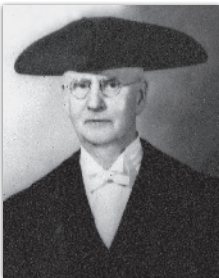
## Hon. Philippe Adjutor Talbot



**Speaker**  
1923-1936

Philippe Adjutor Talbot was born in Quebec in 1879. He worked as a telegraph operator for the Canadian Northern Railway, and then as the Secretary Treasurer of the Farmers Packing Company. Talbot was the Director of the Excelsior Coal Mining Company and the Northern Supply Company. He was elected to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba in 1915 for the constituency of La Verendrye. Talbot served as the Speaker of the Assembly from 1923 to 1936, and as Clerk of Executive Council from 1937 to 1948.

## Hon. Robert Hawkins



**Speaker**  
1937-1949

Robert Hawkins was born in England in 1879. He was the Founder and President of the Associated Hospitals of Manitoba, and served as police magistrate and juvenile court justice. In 1932 Hawkins was elected Member of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba for the constituency of Dauphin. He served as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly from 1937 to 1949.

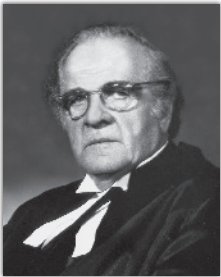
## Hon. Wallace Conrad Miller



**Speaker**  
1950

Wallace Conrad Miller was born in Waterloo County Ontario in 1896, and enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force in 1916. He served in France during the First World War, and was invalided home after being wounded in 1918. Miller was elected Member of the Legislative Assembly for the constituency of Morden and Rhineland in 1936. He served as Provincial Secretary from 1948 to 1950, and as Minister of Education from 1950 to 1958. Miller served as Speaker of the Assembly in 1950, and is known for changing political party twice during his career, from Conservative to Coalition Conservative in 1940, and to the Liberal party in 1950.

## Hon. Nicholas Volodymir Bachynsky



**Speaker**  
1950-1958

Nicholas Volodymir Bachynsky was born in Western Ukraine in 1887, and educated in Manitoba at Brandon Normal School. He worked as an educator in Rus, Whathill, Dehowa, and High Plains Schools. Bachynsky was elected Member of the Legislative Assembly in 1922 for the constituency of Fisher. He served as the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly from 1950 to 1958.

## Hon. Abram William Harrison



**Speaker**  
1958-1963

Abram William Harrison was born in 1898. He was the Manager of the Harrison milling and Grain Company. Harrison was elected Member of the Legislative Assembly for the constituency of Killarney in a by-election in 1943. He served as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba from 1958 to 1963. After his time as Speaker, Harrison was appointed Minister without portfolio, a position he held until his retirement from politics in 1966.



## Hon. Thelma Bessie Forbes



**Speaker**  
1963-1966

Thelma Forbes was born in Manitou Manitoba in 1910. She was employed as a Social Worker and Teacher before entering politics. In 1959 Forbes was elected Member of the Legislative Assembly in a by-election in the constituency of Cypress. She was only the third woman elected to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. Forbes was appointed Speaker of the Assembly in 1963, becoming the first woman to hold this position in Manitoba, and only the second female Speaker in the Commonwealth. Forbes was the first female cabinet minister in Manitoba, holding the portfolios of Urban Development and Municipal Affairs. During her political career Forbes was also the Minister of Government Services.

## Hon. James H. Bilton



**Speaker**  
1966-1969

James H. Bilton was born in Yorkshire in 1908. He served with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police from 1931 to 1953. Bilton was the Publisher and Editor of the Swan River Star and Times prior to his political career. In 1962 Bilton was elected Member of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba for the constituency of Swan River. He served as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly from 1966 to 1969.

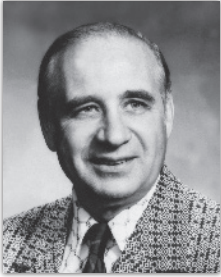
## Hon. Ben Hanuschak



**Speaker**  
1969-1970

Ben Hanuschak was born in Saskatchewan in 1930, and educated at the University of Manitoba. He worked as a teacher at Fisher Branch School prior to entering politics. In 1966 Hanuschak was elected Member of the Legislative Assembly for the constituency of Burrows. He served as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly from 1969 to 1970, after which he held several Ministerial portfolios including: Consumer and Corporate and Internal Services 1970-1971, Education 1971-76, Colleges and Universities 1973-1976, Urban Affairs 1973, Continuing Education and Manpower 1976-1977, Tourism Recreation and Cultural Affairs 1976-1977. In 1977 Hanuschak formed the Progressive Party of Manitoba with Sid Green and Bud Boyce. He was a Trustee and Chairman of the Seven Oaks School Division.

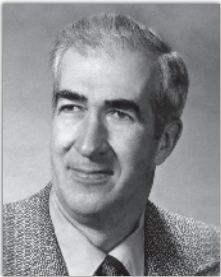
## Hon. Peter Fox



**Speaker**  
1971-1977

Peter Fox was born in Yugoslavia in 1921 and educated at United College and the University of Manitoba. He served in the Canadian Army during the Second World War, after which he worked as a stationary engineer for Canadian Packers Limited. Fox was elected Member of the Legislative Assembly in 1966 for the constituency of Kildonan. He served as Speaker of the Assembly from 1971 to 1977. After his time in the Assembly, Fox served on the board of Manitoba Hydro.

## Hon. Harry Edward Graham



**Speaker**  
1977-1981

Harry Graham was born in Foxwarren Manitoba in 1921. He worked as Vice Chairman of the Russell District Hospital. In 1969 Graham was elected Member of the Legislative Assembly for the constituency of Birtle-Russell when the friend he was helping run in the election had to drop out, and Graham took his place. He served as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly from 1977 to 1981.

## Hon. Derek James Walding



**Speaker**  
1982-1986

Derek James Walding was born in Rushden England in 1937, and served in the military in Ireland. He was educated at the London School of Optometry, graduating with honors. Walding worked as an optician in Winnipeg for ten years prior to entering politics. He was elected Member of the Legislative Assembly for the constituency of St. Vital during a by-election in 1971. Walding served as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly from 1982 to 1986.

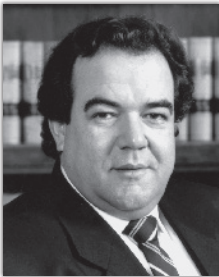
## Hon. Myrna A. Phillips



**Speaker**  
1986-1988

Myrna Phillips was born in Roland Manitoba in 1942. She was President of the Park Community Centre in Brandon, and the Place for Kids Daycare in Wolseley. Phillips was executive of the Manitoba Government Employees association, and the Legislative Assistant to the Minister of Industry, Trade, and Technology. In 1981 Phillips was elected Member of the Legislative Assembly for the constituency of Wolseley. She served as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly from 1986 to 1988, and was only the second woman to serve as Speaker in Manitoba.

## Hon. Denis Rocan



**Speaker**  
1988-1995

Denis Rocan was born in 1949 in Somerset Manitoba. He served as a Member of the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. In 1986 Denis Rocan was elected Member of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba for the constituency of Turtle Mountain. Rocan served as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly from 1988 to 1995.

## Hon. Louise Dacquay



**Speaker**  
1995-1999

Louise Dacquay was born in 1940, and worked as a business education teacher for seventeen years prior to entering politics. She served as a City of Winnipeg Councillor from 1986 to 1989. Dacquay was Special Advisor to the Minister of Urban Affairs and Housing prior to her election. In 1990 she was elected Member of the Legislative Assembly for the constituency of Seine River. Dacquay served as Deputy Speaker from 1990 to 1995, and as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly from 1995 to 1999.

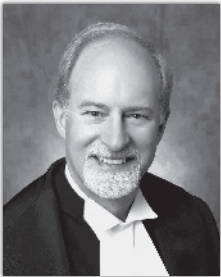
## Hon. George Hickes



**Speaker**  
1999-2011

George Hickes was born in the Northwest Territories (now Nunavut) in 1946, and raised in Churchill Manitoba. In his youth, Hickes captured beluga whales with his bare hands, earning him the nickname “Coldwater Cowboy”. He worked as an educator and trainer in Northern Manitoba and Winnipeg prior to entering politics. In 1990 Hickes was elected Member of the Legislative Assembly for the constituency of Pointe Douglas, the first person of Inuit descent elected to the Assembly in Manitoba. He served as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly from 1999 to 2011. Hickes was the first Speaker in Manitoba to not be appointed, but rather chosen by secret ballot by all elected Members of the Assembly, a practice which continues to this day.

## Hon. Daryl Reid



**Speaker**  
2011-2016

Daryl Reid was born in 1950 in the City of Winnipeg. Prior to entering politics, Reid worked for the Canadian National Railway. In 1990 he was elected Member of the Legislative Assembly for the constituency of Transcona. Daryl Reid served as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba from 2011 to 2016.

## Hon. Myrna Driedger



**Speaker**  
2016-present

Myrna Driedger was born in Benito, Manitoba. Prior to entering politics she had a successful 23 year career as a Registered Nurse. She was then the President and Executive Director of Child Find Manitoba. Since being elected in 1998 Driedger has held many diverse roles including Deputy Leader, Critic for Health, Finance, Education and Families and member of the Public Accounts Committee. She was elected Speaker in 2016 and again in 2019. Driedger is a member of the Canadian Region - Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, serves on the Executive of the Speakers of Canada Association as well as the Executive Committee of the Midwestern Legislative Conference and the Canada / US Relations Committee. She is the founder of the Nellie McClung Foundation and was the first Manitoban to chair the Canadian Region of Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians.